

**CITY OF CLEWISTON  
Special Commission Meeting  
January 6, 2014**

The City of Clewiston City Commission held a special Commission meeting in the City Hall Commission Chambers Monday, January 6, 2014. The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Mayor Phillip Roland. The audience recited The Lord's Prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Attendance:**

**Commissioners Present:** Mayor Phillip Roland, Commissioner James Pittman, and Commissioner Julio Rodriguez. Commissioner Richard Miller joined the meeting at 10:30 a.m. and Commissioner Mali Gardner was absent.

**Personnel Present:** City Manager Al Perry, Finance Director Ted Byrd, City Clerk Marilyn McCorvey, Recreation Director Lance Ramer, and City Attorney Charles Schoech.

**1. Discussion of City's Intent to Use the Uniform Method of Collecting Non-Ad Valorem Assessment on Real Property Within the City's Jurisdictional Boundaries for Recreational Purposes.**

City Manager Perry stated the goal is to spread the cost of East Hendry County recreation off of City residents. Currently the City's recreation budget is spread out among our residents for about \$250 per household, with approximately 40% to 50% of households not paying anything. Mayor Roland stated we are trying to follow the footprint of West County Rec where every residential unit is charged the same, \$100. Mayor Roland stated he is the Chairman of the East County Rec Board and feels that every City household should pay \$150 and everyone that benefits from East County Recreation should also pay \$150; businesses would be exempt from the assessment. County Administrator Charles Chapman stated the County is encouraged that East Rec will be a success, even with the challenges that need to be worked out. Mr. Chapman stated he has met with City Manager Perry and they have identified a handful of options that should be looked at, including putting some partnerships in place. Mr. Chapman stated that Central County has identified some options in their budget that may offset some of the City's cost. He stated there may be some grants and other things that have not been identified yet also. Mr. Chapman stated as County Administrator, he is willing to commit to help the City make this work. There was discussion on how giving up City control might affect our facilities or the assessment. City Attorney Schoech stated if the County extended their MSBU to cover the City, the Commission would have to pass an ordinance to establish the rate and would have the ability to pass an ordinance to withdraw from the MSBU. County Commissioner Janet Taylor stated that the East Rec MSBU can only be used for recreational purposes. Commissioner Pittman stated that he would rather the City maintain control, but he does not think we are ready to proceed yet. Commissioner Rodriguez expressed his concern about the East Recreation budget. He stated the East Rec budget must be controlled and managed. Commissioner Rodriguez further stated that he believes it will take more than \$800,000 to run East Rec. Commissioner Rodriguez stated he does not have a problem running programs in Harlem and Montura, but does not want to build facilities. Mayor Roland stated that 80% of our facilities are in Sugarland Park which is in the middle of the East Recreation area and feels that if we stop quibbling about what to do, we can put some programs together. County Commissioner Janet Taylor stated that if the Harlem residents pay, the kids should not have to come to Clewiston to play. Commissioner Rodriguez stated these discussions were started not to increase recreation, but how to pay for what we have. County Administrator Charles Chapman stated he has concerns as to whether the County would have time to put the mechanism in place this year, and maybe a split model is the best for one year to see how it works. He stated that state of the art recreation programs can be made viable by partnering with other groups without the budget going up. Mr. Chapman stated that the City has a great model and little things will be a big win. Summer camp and pool openings will fold into the revenue stream and we will be able to see if we are getting the bang for the buck. Mr. Chapman further stated that we will need to be very creative for the first five years, but if we can get over the three year hump, we can see what can be brought to the table to make a successful venture.

City Manager Perry read a statement that Commissioner Gardner asked be put in the minutes. "The recreational budget burden to City residents must be reduced. The City's participation in the East County Rec MSBU for 2014-2015 is a must for this burden to be reduced. The millage burden for recreation can no longer be sustained by City residents. It is time for us to take the steps to reduce the burden, I would urge my fellow Commissioners to take the necessary steps today to reduce the tax

burden on the community by agreeing to have a combined East Rec program with City and County residents. In my opinion, this is the only way to sustain our recreational department for the future”.

Commissioner Miller stated what got us to this point is the cost of maintenance and every area has facilities. The City has great facilities which took many years to build, but if he lived in the other areas, he would want facilities and that part of the East Rec budget should be used for capital. Commissioner Miller stated it is the job of the City and County to pay for the facilities, and residents should pay user fees. Commissioner Miller believes some of the funds should be earmarked for capital. The Commission discussed the possible scenarios for reducing the millage. Commissioner Pittman stated the City has received money from the County for recreation and his millage has not been reduced. Commissioner Pittman stated for this year, if the County funded Recreation at the \$200,000 amount, we could lower the millage, run the programs for a year and try to implement some of the ideas County Administrator Chapman discussed. He felt we should delay the assessment for one year to see how the program worked for one full year. County Administrator Chapman stated that if that was the City’s wish, the timing was perfect as he is currently building their budget. County Commissioner Janet Taylor asked why anyone in the City might challenge the assessment. City Attorney Schoech stated that property must receive a benefit in order to be assessed and that is what might be challenged. County Administrator Chapman stated he understands the goal is to reduce ad valorem taxes and he thinks the County can work with the City to accomplish this goal. Mr. Chapman asked that the Commission consider going through the legal procedures to put the assessment in place, and if they decide not to implement it, the County will work with the City. He also thought it best for the City and County to move forward as separate entities.

Commissioner Rodriguez thanked Mr. Chapman for coming and giving the City his suggestions. He stated he would support Mr. Chapman’s suggestion and hopes to continue to provide a good recreation program for the City and East Rec.

Kevin McCarthy asked if the County has agreed to raise their MSBU to \$150. County Administrator Chapman stated the assessment has not been considered as they are not sure what the assessment needs to be. Mr. McCarthy stated as a business and property owner, he thinks he will save money, but without real numbers he cannot make that decision and before he can support an assessment, he wants to see the numbers. Mr. McCarthy stated the County Commission chambers were full when the Pioneer assessment went up \$25. County Commissioner Janet Taylor stated Harlem community residents have agreed to pay up to \$200.

Commissioner Pittman stated he is in favor of East Rec happening and thinks it is premature, but he will support moving forward with the public hearing. He stated that at the present time, nobody knows how much East Rec will cost and this year we will find out at least where \$125,000 goes.

**Commissioner Rodriguez made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Miller, to move forward with the advertising of a public hearing to place a special assessment on residential property for recreational purposes within the municipal limits of Clewiston. Vote 4 yeas, 0 nays. (Commissioner Gardner was absent)**

**ADJOURNMENT:** The meeting was adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

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Phillip Roland, Mayor

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Marilyn McCorvey, City Clerk